



## 2002 Wetlands Reserve Program

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**Customer Focus** - Bill Brixey, Lincoln County farmer, is the owner of an old vegetable farm on the Dry Creek bottom. He wanted to turn the old farm into something that would be productive, but the occasional flooding in the bottom allowed few options. His son-in-law, George Hicks, learned of the WRP at a local Lions Club meeting and passed the word on to Brixey, who signed up for the program. Mr. Brixey enrolled his land under the permanent easement option.

The restoration activity involved creating two ten-acre cells that established the shallow water necessary for wetland restoration. The cells are deep along the embankment and shallow up stream to provide the best conditions to grow the wetland plants. NRCS designs also allowed for nesting islands to reduce predation of waterfowl nests. "Our families have always enjoyed the outdoors and wildlife," Hicks said. "I spend a lot more time now doing wildlife photography than I do hunting, so there will not be any hunting on the restored areas."



### Oklahoma Summary

#### Overview:

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to restore, enhance, and protect wetlands that have been altered by agricultural production practices, including pasture and forestry production. Landowners have the option of enrolling eligible lands through permanent easements, 30-year easements, and restoration cost-share agreement.

The Oklahoma WRP currently encompasses 34 counties. The variety of wetland restoration goes from bottomland range sites of the Central Rolling Red Plains in the west that average 27 inches of precipitation annually to the bottomland hardwoods of the Southern Coastal Plain that average 50 inches of rainfall annually. Oklahoma's WRP projects most often fall into the following categories: floodplain restoration, playa restoration, and riparian corridors. All three categories have their own unique characteristics and successful outcomes.

NRCS has the authority to develop cooperative agreements with outside conservation groups who can assist with program implementation. The Oklahoma NRCS has entered into a Cooperative Agreement with Ducks Unlimited to assist with the surveying and contracting of wetland restoration and enhancement.

Representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, and Ducks Unlimited meet with the NRCS on a monthly basis to provide a team approach to wetland restoration. The team's activities include scheduling restoration activities, reviewing compatible use requests, and evaluating applications.

#### Accomplishments:

The Oklahoma WRP projects range in size from 7 acres to 7,800 acres. The average size is 310 acres, and the average cost for easement acquisition and restoration is currently \$607 dollars per acre.

Oklahoma's FY 2002 allocation was \$5 million. Currently, Oklahoma has 146 total contracts on 43,960 acres. 103 contracts are permanent easements, 7 contracts are 30 year easements, and 36 contracts are 10 year restoration agreements. Over \$23,000,000 has been utilized in Oklahoma for easement acquisition, restoration, and enhancement efforts. There are 47 unfunded applications totaling 6,789 acres with an estimated cost of \$4,597,550.

#### Special Project Highlight:

The Red Slough WRP easement in McCurtain County has been partially purchased by the U.S. Forest Service and is being managed for public use by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. This WRP project has produced 257 documented species of birds in the last two years. Some of the birds that have been sighted in the Red Slough are considered first time sightings in Oklahoma. The diverse habitat that has been developed through the wetland restoration and enhancement efforts is providing the habitats required by a variety of wetland dependent species.

**State Contact:**

Kevin D. Norton, Assistant State Conservationist, Programs, 405-742-1236, Kevin.Norton@ok.usda.gov.

**Oklahoma Dollars and Contracts by Congressional District**

<b>Congressional Districts</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 2002</b>		<b>Cumulative Total (96-02)</b>	
	<b>Obligated Dollars</b>	<b>Number of Contracts</b>	<b>Obligated Dollars</b>	<b>Number of Contracts</b>
<b>District 1</b>	\$221,665	1	\$245,610	2
<b>District 2</b>	\$3,508,273	16	\$15,922,516	74
<b>District 3</b>	\$483,113	4	\$3,798,709	43
<b>District 4</b>	\$705,911	5	\$3,077,189	23
<b>District 5</b>	\$81,038	2	\$261,973	3
<b>State Totals</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>\$23,305,997</b>	<b>145</b>

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